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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No. **D.N.7158**
First Inventor or Application Identifier **Abrams, L.B.**
Title **Co-Molded Flock Transfer & Method**
Express Mail Label No.

APPLICATION ELEMENTS
See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Box Patent Application
Washington, DC 20231

1. ☒ * Fee Transmittal Form (e.g., PTO/SB/17)
(Submit an original and a duplicate for fee processing)
2. ☒ Specification [Total Pages **10**]
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
- Descriptive title of the Invention
 - Cross References to Related Applications
 - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
 - Reference to Microfiche Appendix
 - Background of the Invention
 - Brief Summary of the Invention
 - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
 - Detailed Description
 - Claim(s)
 - Abstract of the Disclosure
3. ☒ Drawing(s) (35 U.S.C. 113) [Total Sheets **2**]
4. Oath or Declaration w/Power [Total Pages **12**]
- a. ☒ Newly executed (original or copy)
- b. ☐ Copy from a prior application (37 C.F.R. § 1.63(d))
(for continuation/divisional with Box 17 completed)
[Note Box 5 below]
- i. ☐ **DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)**
Signed statement attached deleting
inventor(s) named in the prior application,
see 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
5. ☐ Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4b is checked)
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a
copy of the oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is
considered to be part of the disclosure of the accompanying
application and is hereby incorporated by reference therein.

6. ☐ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)
7. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission
(if applicable, all necessary)
- a. ☐ Computer Readable Copy
- b. ☐ Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
- c. ☐ Statement verifying identity of above copies

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

8. ☐ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))
9. ☐ 37 C.F.R. § 3.73(b) Statement ☐ Power of Attorney
(when there is an assignee)
10. ☐ English Translation Document (if applicable)
11. ☐ Information Disclosure ☐ Copies of IDS
Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 Citations
12. ☐ Preliminary Amendment
13. ☒ Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503)
(Should be specifically itemized)
14. ☒ * Small Entity ☐ Statement filed in prior application,
Statement(s) Status still proper and desired
(PTO/SB/09-12)
15. ☐ Certified Copy of Priority Document(s)
(if foreign priority is claimed)
16. ☐ Other:

* NOTE FOR ITEMS 1 & 14: IN ORDER TO BE ENTITLED TO PAY SMALL ENTITY
FEES, A SMALL ENTITY STATEMENT IS REQUIRED (37 C.F.R. § 1.121), EXCEPT
IF ONE FILED IN A PRIOR APPLICATION IS RELIED UPON (37 C.F.R. § 1.121).

17. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box, and supply the requisite information below and in a preliminary amendment

☐ Continuation ☐ Divisional ☐ Continuation-in-part (CIP) of prior application No: _____

Prior application Information: Examiner _____ Group / Art Unit: _____

18. CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

☐ Customer Number or Bar Code Label ☐ Correspondence address below
(Insert Customer No. or Attach bar code label here)

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Signature **[Signature]** Date **07/24/00**

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Box Patent Application, Washington, DC 20231.

Applicant or Patentee: Louis Brown Abrams Attorney's
Serial or Patent No.: _____ Docket
Filed or Issued: _____ No. 7158
For: "Co-Molded Flock Transfer and Method"

VERIFIED STATEMENT (DECLARATION) CLAIMING SMALL ENTITY STATUS
(37 CFR 1.9(f) and 1.27(c) - SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN

I hereby declare that I am

- () the owner of the small business concern identified below:
(X) an official of the small business concern empowered to act on behalf of the concern identified below.

NAME OF CONCERN: High Voltage Graphics, Inc.
ADDRESS OF CONCERN: P.O. Box 41
Fort Collins, Colorado 80522

I hereby declare that the above identified small business concern qualifies as a small business concern as defined in 13 CFR 121.3-18, and reproduced in 37 CFR 1.9(d), for purposes of paying reduced fees under Section 41(a) and (b) of Title 35, United States Code, in that the number of employees of the concern, including those of its affiliates, does not exceed 500 persons. For purposes of this statement, (1) the number of employees of the business concern is the average over the previous fiscal year of the concern of the persons employed on a full-time, part-time or temporary basis during each of the pay periods of the fiscal year, and (2) concerns are affiliates of each other when either, directly or indirectly, one concern controls or has the power to control the other, or a third party or parties controls or has the power to control both.

I hereby declare that rights under contract or law have been conveyed to and remain with the small business concern identified above with regard to the invention entitled

"Co-Molded Flock Transfer and Method"

inventor(s) Louis Brown Abrams
described in:

- (X) the specification filed herewith
() the application Serial No. _____
() Patent No. _____ issued _____

If the rights held by the above-identified small business concern are not exclusive, each individual, concern or organization having rights to the invention is listed below* and no rights to the invention are held by any person, other than the inventor, who could not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(d) or by any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(d) or a nonprofit organization under 37 CFR 1.9(e). *NOTE: Separate verified statements are required from each named person, concern or organization having rights to the invention averring to their status as small entities. (37 CFR 1.27).

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
() INDIVIDUAL () SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN () NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
() INDIVIDUAL () SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN () NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

I acknowledge the duty to file, in this application or patent, notification of any change in status resulting in loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the earliest of the issue fee or any maintenance fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application, any patent issuing thereon, or any patent to which this verified statement is directed.

NAME OF PERSON SIGNING Louis Brown Abrams
TITLE OF PERSON OTHER THAN OWNER President
ADDRESS OF PERSON SIGNING P.O. Box 41
Fort Collins, Colorado 80522

SIGNATURE *Louis Brown Abrams*, President / DATE 4 July 2000
Louis Brown Abrams

SPECIFICATION

To All Whom It May Concern:

Be It Known That I, Louis Brown Abrams, a citizen of the United States, residing in the County of Larimer, and State of Colorado, whose post office address is P.O. Box 41, Fort Collins, Colorado 80522-0041, has invented new and useful improvements in

CO-MOLDED FLOCK TRANSFER AND METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

Not Applicable

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not Applicable.

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to molded articles having flocked surfaces, and, in particular, to a new and improved method of applying flocked transfers to molded products.

Background of the Invention

It's often desirable to decorate molded plastic parts for aesthetic or practical purposes. Injection molded articles are often decorated using inks, screen printing, pad printing, direct electrostatic flocking and hot stamping. These methods are most often post-molding operations requiring additional processing and cost and time. In addition, the resulting quality of the product is often low, due to the low quality of adhesion or unevenness of the coating.

Recently In-Mold Decoration has been developed to incorporate the application of decoration while the part is being molded to eliminate the extra step; however, a number of problems have developed with this technology that relate to the inability of the ink or decoration to remain stable during the heat and force of injecting the resins into the mold, that relate to the difficulty of getting the inserted decoration to stay in place, and which may relate to the decoration surface becoming smeared, crushed, or otherwise disturbed during injection molding.

Summary Of The Invention

The present invention uses flock heat transfer type media rather than ink-printed film inserts in order to provide a plush, evenly-coated, three-dimensional textured decoration molded

together with the hot resins when the part is formed. Using flock transfer media, a plushly textured decoration is permanently attached to the surface of the molded part. In order to accomplish this the hot melt adhesive commonly used with flock heat transfer manufacturing is eliminated so it will not liquefy and ooze out around the decoration in the mold. In addition, another adhesive, such as a tie coat material, may be used instead of a normal hot melt to prevent oozing and to promote adhesion and/or chemical compatibility with the molding resin, when injecting molding a flock transfer directly to the polymer molded article.

The mold preferably has a depression or locating pins or other mechanical parts to assist with aligning and holding the decoration in place. Additionally, "dams" built into the mold around the perimeter of the flock heat transfer may be included in order to prevent seepage of the molding resin into the interstitial spaces of the flock transfer, between the fibers.

To further accommodate the incorporation of such a decoration in the injection mold, the molding process may be modified for example by purposely selecting resins of lower melting point or by injecting the resins in two separate stages, a first more "gentle" injection to set the decoration in place, followed up by a full-pressure normal injection of resin.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view a flock transfer being applied to an article in a mold, wherein the transfer lies on top of the article;

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view similar to FIG. 1, but wherein the flock transfer is imbedded in the article;

Figure 3 is a top plan view of an embodiment of the present invention showing the flock transfer inside an injection mold cavity, wherein the flock transfer is created with a border and

Figure 4 is a top plan view of an embodiment of the present invention showing the flock transfer inside an injection mold, wherein the mold contains a border.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In FIG. 1, a transfer 2 of the present invention is shown in place in a mold 4 to be co-molded with a plastic article 6. In FIG. 1, the transfer 2 is shown on top of the article 6. The transfer 2 comprises a dimensionally stable sheet 8 to which a conventional flock transfer release adhesive 10, usually silicone wax, is applied in the reverse of a desired pattern or with overall coverage of the sheet, corresponding to the overall image which is to be flocked and transferred. The flock 12 which may be rayon or any other type of material with a conductive finish such as nylon, polyester or the like is applied to the activated adhesive 10 in any conventional manner, such as, conventional electrostatic means, vibration, air flow or gravity. The method of applying the flock 12 to the adhesive 10 depends on the transfer to be achieved – will the transfer be one color or several colors, will the transfer include any non-flock decorations, etc. Thus, the transfer itself, can be a conventional flock transfers, Lextra or Lextra 3-D type transfer, flocked roll goods such as made by Societe D' Enduction et de Flokage, located in Laval, France, from which pieces may be cut out and even pre-formed to fit better into molds where the surface of the finished product is not flat. The lower ends of the flock 12 are coated with a permanent binder adhesive 14 such as a water based latex which binds the flock into a unit. The binder 14 may contain an additional adhesive, for promoting the adhesion of the transfer to the resin in molding.

A relatively weak pressure-sensitive adhesive 16 can be added to the carrier film 8 in a separate layer, for the purpose of helping to locate the flock transfer 2 in position inside the mold 4 if no mechanical device is available.

FIGS. 1 and 2 illustrate the application of the transfer 2 to a molded article 6 during the molding process. The transfer 2 is positioned in the mold 4 using the pressure-sensitive adhesive 12. Other methods, such as the use of a vacuum, can be used to hold the transfer 2 in place in the mold 4 during the molding operation. Vacuum holes 18 are shown in the mold 4 which pass through the mold body. As seen, the transfer 2 is in contact with the vacuum holes 18. A vacuum can be drawn through the holes 18 to hold the transfer 2 in place. The flock transfer needs to be held securely in the mold in order to maintain the transfer in the desired location on the finished plastic part. If a slight depression (of about 1mm) is built into the mold cavity to accommodate the flock transfer, it will be flush with the molded plastic surface of the finished part. This is seen in FIG. 2. If there is no depression, the flock decoration will stand up on top of the plastic surface, as seen in FIG. 1.

After the transfer is positioned in the mold, the mold is closed and hot resin is injected into the mold. To ensure that the transfer will stay in position during the resin injection, resin with a lower melting point than the release adhesive 16 is used to avoid dislocation of the transfer. On the other hand, if the melt point of any release adhesive utilized, is higher than that of resin, due to the flock providing insulation to the release adhesive, the release adhesive will really not melt in the first place, and is already cross-linked. Hence, criticality of this point may not be that necessary. A particularly preferred method of molding is Reaction Injection Molding (RIM) wherein two base resins are mixed together just as they enter the mold, a chemical reaction occurs at low heat and the plastic material of the end product is formed at that instant.

In an alternative method, lower-pressure injection may be used in a first stage in order to locate and secure the flock transfer in its precise position. Once the transfer is secured in place by the material of the initial injection, a second, full-pressure injection is made to finish the part.

After the resin is injected into the mold, the mold is cooled by circulating water around the exterior of the mold. Although, in some injecting molding processes, utilizing resin, cooling water may already be circulating through the die, during the injection molding process, and thereafter, as known in the art. The mold can be cooled in any other conventional manner. As the resin cools, it solidifies and forms a permanent adhesion to the binder 14. When the part is cooled sufficiently the mold opens up and the part is ejected. Finally, the release sheet 8 and release adhesive 10 are peeled off the fibers 12 to reveal a finished, flocked, surface on the newly molded part.

As an alternative to the invention as described above, it is likely that the flock 12 can be held by other means, to the molded polymer part 6, as follows. While the various release sheets, and release adhesive, may be initially applied to the upper surface of the flock layer, to hold it in position, during molding, rather than utilizing a permanent binder adhesive 14, to hold the flock within or to the molded part, there may be used a thermal setting polyester, such as available from Bostik, Inc., to permanently adhere the ends of the flock material thereto, and likewise, such a sheet will be cross linked into permanent connection with the molded polymer part 6, to provide a very inherently appearing flock surface, upon the molded part, when finished. Thus, the thermal setting polymer material directly cross links with the molding polymer substance, in the injection molding process, and cures with it, to form a permanently flocked product.

Since the flock of the transfer forms interstitial spaces between fibers, it is desirable to form a barrier between the mold and the perimeter of the transfer to prevent the resin from entering these interstitial spaces during injection of the resin into the mold. Referring to FIG. 3, a barrier 40 may be formed around the transfer 42. Barrier 40 can be formed during the fabrication

of the flock transfer, by providing an excess of binder adhesive 10 around the edge of the transfer. The excess binder adhesive 10 will form a rib or dam around the periphery of the transfer.

Alternatively, referring to FIG. 4, the mold 50 may be provided with a barrier 52, which surrounds transfer 54 when the transfer is placed in the mold. Barrier 52 may be an integral part of mold 50, or may be a separate, added barrier which is composed of silicone, latex or other suitable sealing material.

The in mold flock transfer of the present invention finds particular utility in finished plastic parts where a plush surface is desired.

Numerous variations will occur to those skilled in the art of molding in light of the above description. For example, the in-mold flock transfer decoration of the present invention could be adapted to other molding processes, such as blow molding, vacuum forming, rotational molding and transfer molding. The finished plastic part need not be a flat plane, but by virtue of the flexibility of the flock transfer may be rounded, or portions of the part may be raised. These are merely illustrative.

CLAIMS:

1. A method of decorating a molded article comprising:
providing a transfer having a flocking layer, a release sheet on one side of the flocking and a layer of binder adhesive on an opposite side of the flocking;

securing the release sheet to an interior wall of a mold in which the article is made; and

molding the part such that resin contacts the layer of binder adhesive;

cooling the mold;

ejecting the part; and

removing the release sheet from the transfer.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the release sheet is affixed to the mold base with an adhesive.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the release sheet is affixed to the mold by vacuum.

4. The method of claim 1 including a step of preventing the resin from entering interstitial spaces between the flocking.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein the preventing step includes forming a dam around the perimeter of the transfer.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the dam is formed by placing a barrier in the mold, the transfer being positioned within the barrier.

7. The method of claim 5 wherein the dam is part of the transfer, the dam comprising a built up section of binder adhesive around the periphery of the transfer.

8. A method of decorating a molded article comprising:

coating a release sheet with a release adhesive;

flocking flock into said release adhesive by imbedding a first end of said flock into the release adhesive to result in at least one pattern of flock arranged to form a predetermined design adhered to said release sheet;

forming a barrier around the periphery of said flock;

affixing said release sheet to the interior surface of a mold; and

molding an article over said adhesive binder and thereby permanently bonding said flock to said article.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of forming said barrier comprises applying a binder adhesive to said flock; said binder adhesive being built up around the periphery of said flock.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of forming said barrier comprises providing a dam on the surface of the mold, the transfer being applied to the mold within the dam.

11. The method of claim 8 wherein the step of molding the article comprises injecting molten resin into the mold.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the resin is initially injected at a first pressure, the first pressure being sufficiently low to prevent dislodgment of the transfer from the mold wall; and then providing a second injection of the resin at a second higher pressure.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein the injected resin has a lower melting point than the release adhesive.

[illegible][illegible]

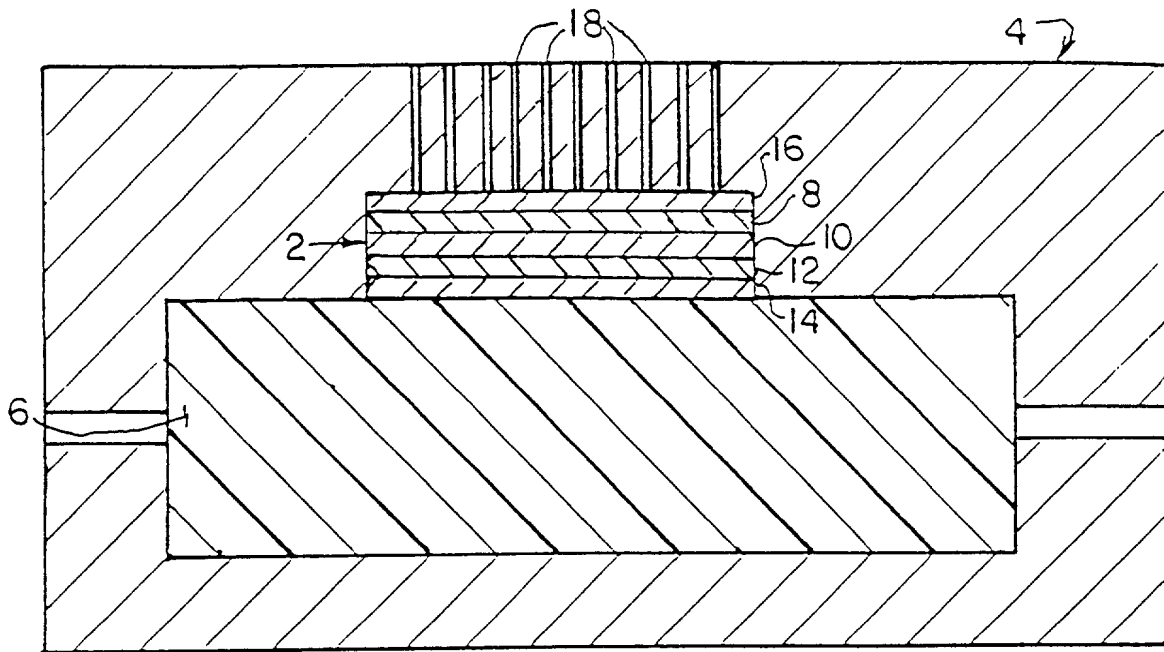


FIG. 1

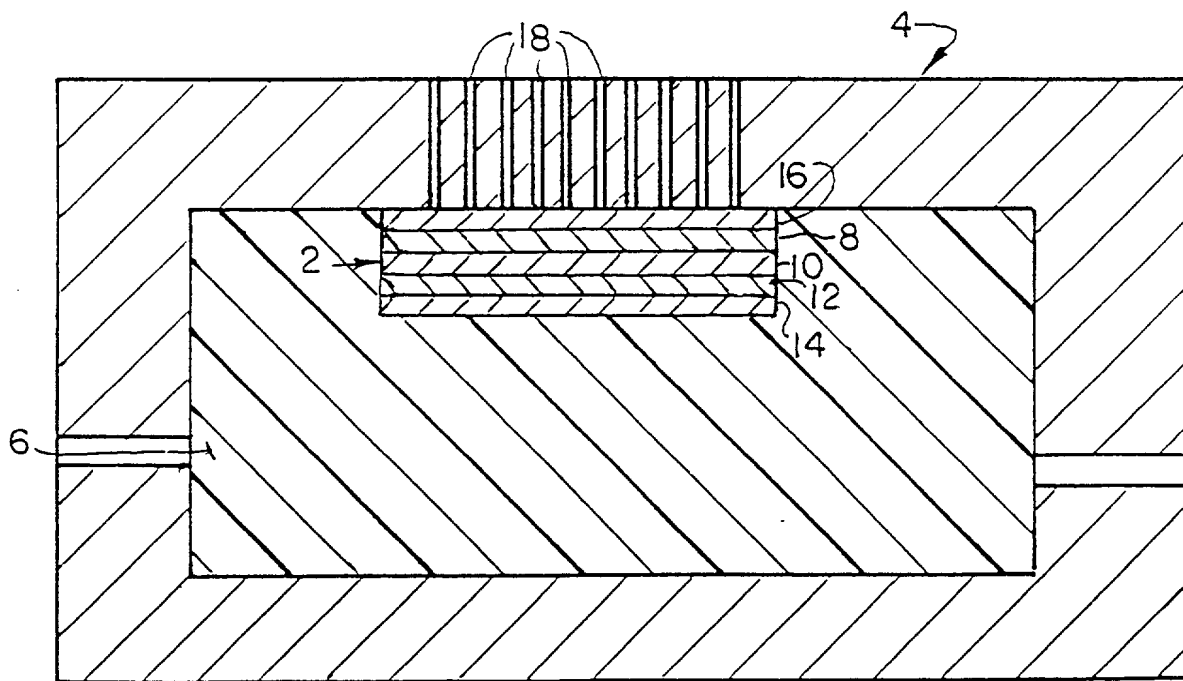


FIG. 2

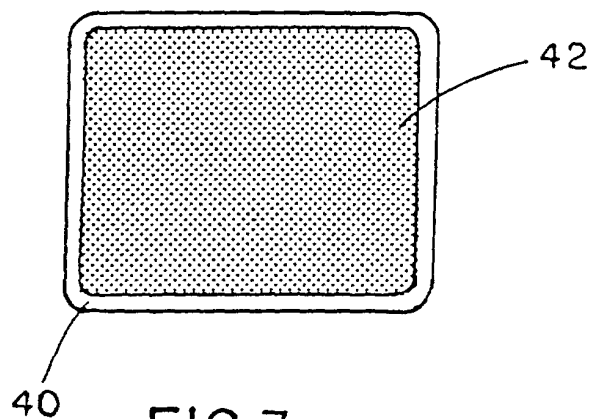


FIG. 3

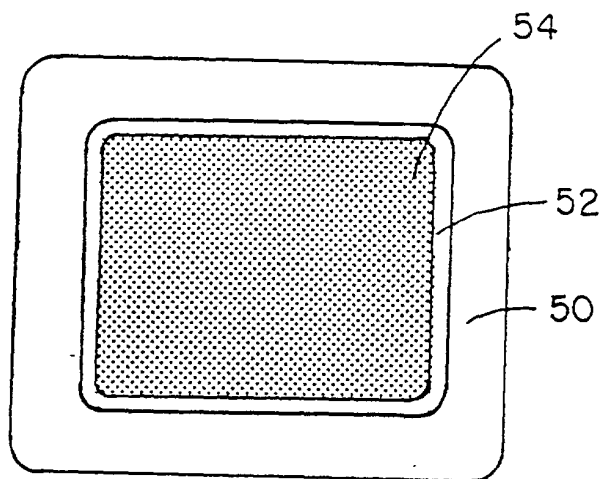


FIG. 4

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100	2101	2102	2103	2104	2105	2106	2107	2108	2109	2110	2111	2112	2113	2114	2115	2116	2117	2118	2119	2120	2121	2122	2123	2124	2125	2126	2127	2128	2129	2130	2131	2132	2133	2134	2135	2136	2137	2138	2139	2140	2141	2142	2143	2144	2145	2146	2147	2148	2149	2150	2151	2152	2153	2154	2155	2156	2157	2158	2159	2160	2161	2162	2163	2164	2165	2166	2167	2168	2169	2170	2171	2172	2173	2174	2175	2176	2177	2178	2179	2180	2181	2182	2183	2184	2185	2186	2187	2188	2189	2190	2191	2192	2193	2194	2195	2196	2197	2198	2199	2200	2201	2202	2203	2204	2205	2206	2207	2208	2209	2210	2211	2212	2213	2214	2215	2216	2217	2218	2219	2220	2221	2222	2223	2224	2225	2226	2227	2228	2229	2230	2231	2232	2233	2234	2235	2236	2237	2238	2239	2240	2241	2242	2243	2244	2245	2246	2247	2248	2249	2250	2251	2252	2253	2254	2255	2256	2257	2258	2259	2260	2261	2262	2263	2264	2265	2266	2267	2268	2269	2270	2271	2272	2273	2274	2275	2276	2277	2278	2279	2280	2281	2282	2283	2284	2285	2286	2287	2288	2289	2290	2291	2292	2293	2294	2295	2296	2297	2298	2299	2300	2301	2302	2303	2304	2305	2306	2307	2308	2309	2310	2311	2312	2313	2314	2315	2316	2317	2318	2319	2320	2321	2322	2323	2324	2325	2326	2327	2328	2329	2330	2331	2332	2333	2334	2335	2336	2337	2338	2339	2340	2341	2342	2343	2344	2345	2346	2347	2348	2349	2350	2351	2352	2353	2354	2355	2356	2357	2358	2359	2360	2361	2362	2363	2364	2365	2366	2367	2368	2369	2370	2371	2372	2373	2374	2375	2376	2377	2378	2379	2380	2381	2382	2383	2384	2385	2386	2387	2388	2389	2390	2391	2392	2393	2394	2395	2396	2397	2398	2399	2400	2401	2402	2403	2404	2405	2406	2407	2408	2409	2410	2411	2412	2413	2414	2415	2416	2417	2418	2419	2420	2421	2422	2
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My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

CO-MOLDED FLOCK TRANSFER AND METHOD

[illegible]

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).

Prior Foreign Application(s): Priority Claimed

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below: NA

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a).which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application: N/A

(Serial No.) (Filing Date) (Status)

I do hereby appoint Paul M. Denk, Patent Office registration No. 22,598, with offices at 763 South New Ballas Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63141, Tel. No. (314) 872-8136, as my attorney and agent with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute the application above set forth, and to transact all business in the United States Patent and Trademark Office in connection therewith.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under §1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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